

4. "Descriptions of six new species of Marine Mollusca from the collection of the late Admiral Keppel." By G. B. Sowerby, F.L.S.

5. "Note on *Voluta Brazieri*, Cox." By E. A. Smith, I.S.O.

6. "On the *Doris planata* of Alder & Hancock." By Sir C. N. E. Eliot, K.C.M.G.

7. "Description of a Helicoid Land-Shell (*Xanthomelon Bednalli*) from Central Australia." By J. H. Ponsonby.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION AT THE MEETING HELD ON  
JUNE 10<sup>TH</sup> UPON THE TWO FOLLOWING QUESTIONS OF  
NOMENCLATURE.

By R. H. BURNE, B.A.

I.—*A species is described as belonging to genus A and is subsequently transferred to genus B, in which there is already a species bearing the same name. Which species, assuming that the one described in genus A is prior in date, requires a new name?*

THE President prefaced the discussion by giving in detail the case (Hedley, Mem. Austral. Mus., iv, p. 389) upon which the question was founded.

The discussion was opened by Mr. E. A. Smith, I.S.O., who maintained that the name of prior date should stand, because a describer is supposed to ascertain what species fall into the genus the species of which he is describing, although they may have been placed in other genera.

Mr. G. B. Sowerby concurred, insisting that the law of specific priority should always be maintained.

Dr. W. T. Blandford, C.I.E., was entirely of the same opinion, and pointed out that if the reverse rule (priority in the genus) were followed, most of the old specific names, those for instance of Linnæus, would have to be altered.

Mr. Bullen Newton, Mr. Melvill, Mr. Da Costa, and the President having spoken in the same sense, letters dealing with this question, received from corresponding and ordinary members and others, were read:—

The opinion expressed by Professor Boettger that "the species described in genus A and subsequently transferred to genus B retains its name *because prior in date*, and the species in genus B, *because posterior in date*, requires a new name," was also held by Professor Brusina, M. Cossmann, W. H. Dall, Ph. Dautzenberg, W. E. Hoyle, A. J. Jukes-Browne, Professor Machrenthal, S. Pace, H. A. Pilsbry, C. W. Stiles, and B. B. Woodward.

Professor Brusina further remarked that, although this is correct theoretically, it is even more necessary from the practical standpoint, as genera and subgenera will for long be unstable quantities, and will in the future undergo many transformations, as their limits are

gradually made more and more definite by appeal, not only to shell-characters, but to embryology and anatomy.

M. Dautzenberg added: "Species alone are clearly defined entities; genera, on the contrary, ought to be considered, at least at present, as unstable, and only more or less ingenious attempts in the formation of groups. If Hervier had known of the existence of *Pleurotoma* (*Drillia*) *suavis*, Smith, he would have taken care not to give the same name to another species of the same group. Hervier, however, committed an error which had to be rectified, and the introduction into the genus *Drillia* of *Pleurotoma suavis*, Smith, should naturally result in the disappearance of *suavis*, Hervier. Mr. Hedley was wrong in replacing *suavis*, Smith, by *prosuavis*, Hedley.

"The case before us is relatively harmless—a name has unintentionally been employed twice, and calls for only a single rectification,—but a much more serious state of things is produced by the intentional use of the same name for species in allied genera. This is to be noticed most frequently among the Helicoids, owing doubtless to the difficulty of finding new specific names in this group. But the genera of Helicoids are probably far from stable, and I am convinced that certain of them are superfluous, and that species with the same name will have to be transferred from one genus to another, when they are more completely studied, anatomically and conchologically. Under these circumstances, authors who give the same name to different species seem to be doing harm, for if the alterations which I foresee are realised, disturbances of nomenclature will result—serious in proportion to the number of duplicate specific names."

The contrary opinion (viz. that the species in genus B retains its name) was held by Colonel Beddome, G. K. Gude, C. Davies Sherborn, and Lieut.-Colonel Wilmer, the reason being assigned that the specific name of longest standing in genus B has the priority.

The meeting then unanimously passed a resolution that in their opinion the specific name originally given in genus A stands.<sup>1</sup>

II.—*A form is described as a variety of one species, and subsequently is described as a new species, with a new name. Which name stands?*

After the President had explained the actual case (Pilsbry, Manual of Conchology, Monograph of *Anoma*) by which the question was called forth, Dr. Blanford, in opening the discussion, pointed out that this was a much more complicated question than the first, and that the answer depended apparently to a great extent upon what is actually meant by a variety. In the case of mere variations, such, for instance, as those of garden plants, depending upon differences

<sup>1</sup> Since the discussion a letter has been received by the President from Mr. Hedley, in which he expresses the view that a specific name should be regarded only from its date of insertion in a genus, and that the name longest in the genus has, therefore, priority. He points out that the contrary view might lead to much confusion, as it might involve a change of name in the case of the type of a genus, should a second species of similar name be subsequently transferred to that genus.

of colour, the varietal names (*alba*, *rufa*, etc.) certainly have not the same standing as specific names, and in the formation of new species may conveniently be ignored. A true subspecies is, however, on a very different footing. Its name is of equal value with a specific name, and should be retained when the subspecies is raised to specific rank.

Mr. Sowerby was of opinion that the varietal name should be retained. But it was suggested by Mr. Da Costa that if this rule were consistently enforced great confusion would almost inevitably arise, owing to the fact that varietal names are usually founded on trivial characters, and would in all probability already be in use in the genus as specific names.

Mr. Melvill and Mr. Smith were of opinion that the new specific name should stand, the latter considering that the credit of founding a species should rest with the man who first correctly recognised it. On the other hand, Mr. Fulton and Mr. Bullen Newton held that the varietal name should be retained. Mr. Newton, however, would allow considerable discretion in the application of the rule in individual cases.

Letters dealing with this question from corresponding and ordinary members and others were then read:—

Professor Boettger, M. Cossmann, W. H. Dall, Ph. Dautzenberg, G. K. Gude, A. J. Jukes-Browne, Professor v. Maehrenthal, S. Pace, H. A. Pilsbry, C. Davies Sherborn, and C. W. Stiles were of opinion that the varietal name should be retained.

M. Dautzenberg further pointed out that this is complementary to the common custom of transforming the specific into the varietal name, when a species after being described is considered to be the variety of another species.

Mr. Pilsbry wrote also: "This view is generally, though not universally held, and was discussed in the celebrated case of *Cypraea gregori*, var. *coloba*. It might be well to obtain an expression of opinion upon the question of whether in one genus two *varieties* may bear the same name. Thus:

*Cyclostoma angustum*, var. *rufilabre*.

,, *jayanum*, var. *rufilabre*."

The opposite opinion (viz. that the new specific name should be used) was expressed by Colonel Beddome, Professor Brusina, W. E. Hoyle, and Colonel Wilmer, on the grounds that the author of the variety had failed to properly understand it (Brusina), that varietal names have no status as against specific (Hoyle), and that varietal names are seldom suitable for use as specific names (Brusina, Beddome, Hoyle).

Mr. B. B. Woodward wrote: "There are varietal names that are eminently good so long as they are used as such, but which would be meaningless when used for specific designation. These would have to yield place were the specific distinctness of form proved. If the new specific name be given under the belief that the form is a valid species, and it should prove that this is not the case, then the new name becomes a synonym for the varietal one. It should, however,

be a general rule on the elevation of a variety into a species to retain the varietal as the new specific name."

The President having stated that, on the whole, he was of opinion that the new specific name should be used, the meeting agreed by a small majority that, *in the case upon which the question was based*, Mr. Pilsbry was justified in giving Adams' varietal name of *tessellata* precedence over Pfeiffer's later specific name.

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## NOTES.

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NOTE ON *DAMAYANTIA SMITHI*, COLLINGE & GODWIN-AUSTEN. (Read 10th June, 1904.)—There are many passages in Mr. Collinge's paper in vol. vi, pp. 9–12, of this journal I should like to reply to, but it is quite time this argument came to an end. I have only to refer to a point of nomenclature, and I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible. *Damayantia Smithi* was described and very clearly figured in the P.Z.S., 1895, pl. xi, by Mr. Collinge and myself. In 1901 Mr. Collinge created a new genus *Isselentia* (allied to *Damayantia*), making the type *plicata*, Collge., a species similar in all important characters to the figures of *D. Smithi* in the P.Z.S., pl. xi, and, I may add, all the figures, not 1–5 as quoted on p. 11, vol. vi. The species we described together in 1895 I consider should stand as *Isselentia Smithi*. It would be quite wrong to transfer the specific name *Smithi* to another very distinct species of the genus *Collingea*. This last species should therefore be named; it was not figured in 1895. In this connection compare my drawings of the generative organs of *Damayantia Smithi*, figs. 7, 7a, 7b, and 7c, Land and Fresh-water Moll. India, pl. lxxiii, and Mr. Collinge's figs. 9 and 10, pl. xi, P.Z.S., all made in the same year; also look at the drawings of the jaw and radula of *Damayantia Smithi*, figured in the P.Z.S., Moll. Ind., and Proc. Malac. Soc., vol. v, pl. xi, figs. 2b, 2c, which may now be seen in the Natural History Museum with the label *D. Smithi*, written at the time it was mounted. Not a single figure on pl. xi, P.Z.S., applies to *Microparmarion* or *Collingea*, and all, except figs. 9 and 10, drawn by Mr. Collinge, were copied by Mr. Smit from my drawings on autographic paper.

H. H. GODWIN-AUSTEN.

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